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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, the Northeast has been hit with another week of monsoon season. It appears that we're not going to get much of a Spring season again this year. We had one day that it didn't rain, and I decided to take advantage of it and I played golf. The lawn and gardens are growing great, but no such luck managing them with all of this rain.

You would think that with this kind of weather, I'd take advantage of it and finish getting set up with our new DSL. Well, I was planning to do do, but that didn't happen. Finally getting hold of the tech support for the wireless PCI adaptor, I was told that there was little chance I'd get it configured to network with my wife's wireless system. Their suggestion, get Windows XP. For the money that I'd have to spend to purchase this adaptor card and a copy of XP, I could likely buy a new PC with everything I needed. Well, I already have the card, so I may spring for XP. If it's the only way to get my DSL working... I'm waiting to hear back from my father to see if he has an extra copy of XP; he buys all kinds of "useless" software and hardware at various office/electronics stores that offer rebates and freebies with certain purchases. My old bedroom is full of this stuff! We'll see. So, in the meantime, I'm still using dial-up while my wife is enjoying the web at blazing speeds. It had better get Spring-like soon!!

Until next time...

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Atari++ 1.46 Released

Hi folks,

Update time! A new stable release of the Atari++ emulator for Linux and Win32 has been released. As usual, you'll find it here:

http://www.math.tu-berlin.de/~thor/atari++/

What's new this time:

Many thanks goes to Mark Keates for providing a really detailed emulation

of the AMD flash ROM chips, and thus for making Steve Trucker's Flash Carts now really flash-able. The emulator is able to save these carts back to disk as required.

Furthermore, creation of disk images has been simplified a bit. To create an empty disk, just type in a non-existing file name, then format this virtual floppy from the DOS of your choice (or the built-in one).

A couple of improvements have been made for the built-in FMS and Os. For the former, Dos 2.5 directories can now be read fine, and the memory requirements have been dropped considerably (MORE room for programs). For the latter, text windows on Gr.9/10/11 have been improved and no longer flicker during SIO operations.

A couple of other minor problems have been hopefully fixed, more is in the README.

So long,
   Thomas

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""

The Nordic ATARI Computer Show 2006

The Swedish ATARI Users Association (SAK)
The Nordic Atari Computer Show (NAS) 2006

Text version 2.0 (eng) 2006-06-02

Updated information about the convention can be found at:
http://www.sak.nu/ E-mail: i...@sak.nu

INFORMATION ABOUT NAS 2006

THE NORDIC ATARI COMPUTER SHOW 2006

Where: Göteborgs Högre Samskola Gothenburg, Sweden.
        Stampgatan 13. Same area as NAS 2003,2004,2005

When: 30th of June at 18:00 (GMT +01.00) to the 2nd of July 3, 15:00.
        (Non-Stop)
        For visitors without their own computers, the best time to visit
        NAS is at Saturday 1st of July 10:00 to 19:00 and at Sunday 2nd

between 10:00 and 14:00.

What: A LAN-network with Internet connection is available for everyone.

There's also a wireless network available if someone bring a laptop, PDA. Static IP-Addresses to use, but there's also a dhcp scope in the network.

Theme: ct60/EtherNat, FreeMiNT/XaAES
Seminars to be hold at 15:00-18:00 Saturday. At the moment we do not have any seminars scheduled. Most users do demonstrate their systems at their tables.
Internet cafe with classical original ATARI computers, Falcon with steinberg software, synthesizer, lots of ct60 some with EtherNat, Jaguars to play with.

Exhibition:
At this moment Nick Harlow (16/32-Systems) is positive and aimed to come. We can all help him out before NAS with pre-orders and also give him suggestions what to bring to Gothenburg.

http://www.1632systems.co.uk
http://www.1632-sales.zenwebhosting.com/acatalog/
nick AT 1632systems.co.uk

There's always ATARI users who sell things at NAS.

Entry: 30 SEK

Food? There's some restaurants close to NAS
microwave oven, coffee maker available. You have to bring your own food.

Accommodation:

You can sleep at NAS. The building is a school, so you do have to bring all the necessary things to sleep on a floor. There's possible to use the showers as well. Gothenburg is a big town with hotels, youth hostels.

Info: The latest info, maps is always to be found at http://www.sak.nu/

E-mail: info AT sak.nu (SAK)
mille AT sverige.nu (Mille Babic)
mrfuture AT comhem.se (Andreas Sjöö)

Phone to: 0708-35 73 05 (Andreas Sjöö)
0706-66 51 96 (Mille Babic)

KEEP THE TOS PLATFORM ALIVE.
WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT THE NORDIC ATARI COMPUTER SHOW 2006!

Best Regards

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, Mother Nature is playing her little games again here in the Northeast. While we had a couple of days of annoyingly high temperatures a while back, it's been cooler but damp and rainy lately.

I know, the weather isn't a very exciting topic of conversation, but it's about all that I can think of to mention right now.

Maybe it's because I hear people snickering here and there about global warming ever time we have below-normal temperatures for a day or two. Or maybe it's because I'm getting older and temperature and humidity changes make my joints ache. Or maybe even that my mind is going and I just can't think of anything else to complain about. <grin>

Anyway, as summer approaches, I'm sure that we'll have more above-average temperatures and some below-average temperatures just to keep the debate going.

Well, that's about all I've got to say this time around, so let's get on with the news and stuff.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Ivan Capan asked last week about using ST floppy images. He wrote:

"I have lots of files on the PC with a .ST extension and I want to transfer them to floppies. Is there a way to put the floppy in Atari, which is connected with PC in some way (I have a null-modem cable), and use some program to write the image byte by byte to Atari onto its floppy drive?"

This week, David Wade tells Ivan:

"One trick way is to use STTOMSA on PC. This will convert ST format disks into Magic Shadow Archive files. You can split these over multiple floppies. You can then use MSA on the Atari to re-construct the disks. That way you write the disks on the ST and don't try and force the PC Floppy Controller to do unnatural acts such as write oddly formatted sectors. You can get STTOMSA from :-

http://members.fortunecity.com/dahstra/atariarc.html <but scroll past the malware at the top down to MSA utilities.>

and MSA from

http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/zogginhell/download.html

You need real DD floppies."

Jim DeClercq asks about finding his favorite backup program:

"Hard drives do not last forever, my backups are never quite current, and Google can no longer find Charley Image.

Does anyone have a working path, or a working copy I might have? It was freeware on the website of someone German who made neat accessories for Atari ST machines."

'ProTOS' tells Jim:

"You can find it here:
< http://www.wilhelm.de/deu/download/charlyimage.zip > "

Jim replies:

"Thank you. That address does look familiar, but Google did not find it. I wish some of the stuff on that site still existed, now that I can pay for it. This sent from a Stacy using STiNG."

Stephen Moss asks for help with partitioning his hard drive:

"I have a System Solutions Mini S external SCSI HD connected to my 2.5Meg STfm via a Link 97 cable that I no longer require so I though the quickest way of erasing it would be to format it and then repartition using HD Drive V7.5. It formatted ok but I can't partition it, know I have repartitioned this drive before although I can't remember if I also reformatted it at that time.

When I try to partition the drive after clicking ok a pop up box briefly appears that mentions something about partitioning and the end of the second sentence is "memory..." but it is to quick to read it all. Am I being a complete idiot and doing something wrong or have I killed the HD by formatting it?

I also tried partitioning it with AHDI which complained that the HD was formatted with a previous version and requests that I reformat the drive, but when I try to do that with AHDI it refuses."

Uwe Seimet, author of HD Driver, tells Stephen:

"If the box you are mentioning is a regular popup displayed by HDDRUTIL it should not vanish automatically, but only after having been confirmed with a mouse click.

There is only one message (at least in the current versions of

HDDRUTIL) ending with "memory", and it is displayed if there is not enough memory left to operate."

'Phantomm' asks about the STE's modem port:

"I've had a 1040STe for some years, still in new condition.

I would like to change the modem port to a 9 pin like on the MSTE/TT/Falcon.

Can I use a simple adapter to reduce it down to 9pins or will I need to do some re-wiring?"

Mark Bedingfield tells Phantomm:

"Yup, just a DB9 to DB25 converter and away you go."

Phantomm now asks about a subject near and dear to my heart... encryption... and how to do it on an Atari:

"Years ago I recall a discussion on this subject.

Without doing any research first, thought I would ask in here. Is it illegal to send e-mail or do a posting with the text content encrypted?

With all types of hacking and such that goes on, I would like to keep some of my e-mail as private as possible."

Coda tells Phantomm:

"As far as I know, [there are] not any [programs for the ST that do] *meaningful* encryption. I.E nothing that won't be easily breakable."

'Paolo' tells Coda and Phantomm:

"Well, there is Cadenza's EncrypSTer. It uses a 256bit user definable key. Not so bad I'd say."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Hellboy' Hits Streets in 2007!

D1 Grand Prix, Drift Racing
Minnesota Sued Over Game Bill!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Hellboy Hits Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 in 2007

Konami Digital Entertainment GmbH recently announced Hellboy (working title) for the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PSP (PlayStation Portable) and mobile phones.

Based on the acclaimed comic book series from Dark Horse Comics, the game lets players unleash Hellboy's supernatural strength as they smash, crush and demolish their way through over six unique locations that boast fully destructible environments as they attempt to thwart an evil supernatural plot.

Drawing players into the vibrant and detailed world created by comic book legend Mike Mignola, Hellboy lets players step into the muscle bound frame of Hellboy, a hulking crimson-skinned warrior of supernatural creation. On the trail of a crazed witch, Hellboy uncovers a fiendish plot for world domination and must rush to defeat the crazed Hermann von Klempt before he can exert his evil will on a hapless world.

Hellboy offers players a visceral tactical brawling experience, letting them unleash the hero's Right Hand of Doom on wave after wave of enemies. Using a detailed context-sensitive fighting system, players can choose to charge up Hellboy's strikes for added power or use his speed and agility to unleash a rapid fire combination of blows on opponents. They can also grapple with enemies, attacking them from close or even using them as weapons to keep other attackers at bay.

Boasting detailed and expansive environments with advanced lighting and texturing techniques, the levels in Hellboy are also highly destructible, adding another level of strategy to the game's bare knuckled action while bringing the character's untamed power to life. When confronted with a large group of enemies, players can choose to smash a wall to create smaller, more manageable groups and even pick up the rubble to use as a weapon. Hellboy also lets players experience the game co-operatively with two players taking on the roles of characters from the Hellboy universe such as Abe Sapien and Liz Sherman.

"Hellboy unleashes the raw power of the comic book icon with devastating hand to hand combat, an intricate grappling system and fully destructible environments", said Hans-Joachim Amann, Head of European Product Management for Konami Digital Entertainment GmbH. "Followers of the comic book and movie will delight at controlling the sheer power their favourite sharp tongued hero offers, while fans of action games will immediately be drawn into the game's spectacular graphics and intuitive yet strategic gameplay."

Developed by Krome Studios for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PSP, Hellboy is planned for release in 2007. A mobile phone version will also be released in 2007, with further details to follow.

All the Exhilarating Action of Professional Drift Racing Coming to the PlayStation2 in "D1 Grand Prix"

Yuke’s Company of America, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Yuke’s Co., Ltd., and an official sponsor of the D1 Grand Prix Professional Drift Series, announced "D1 Grand Prix", their professional drift racing simulation for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, D1 Grand Prix is expected to be available in July 2006.

D1 Grand Prix recreates the exhilarating art of drifting, including all the cars, tracks, drivers and physics that has made the D1 Grand Prix the pinnacle series in drift racing. Players will be able to select from 39 American and Japanese drivers, as well as vehicles from Toyota, Honda, Mazda, Subaru, Pontiac, and more.

Game features include:

* 13 Driving Circuits from past D1 competitions including Odaiba, Tsukuba Circuit, Autopolis, SUGO, Fuji Speedway, Irwindale, and more.
* Over 40 licensed vehicles to choose from.
* The most realistic drifting physics engine ever in a video game.
* In-depth tutorial teaches players the art of drifting.
* Official D1 Grand Prix car stats, rules, racers and racing circuits.
* Compete in both day and night, clear or rainy day races.
* Enhanced commentary engine lets players hear what the three judges have to say in real time.
* Six modes of play: D1 Series, X-Treme, Time Attack, Survival Mode, Battle Mode, D1 Theater (unlockable movies of actual footage of the D1 Grand Prix, as well as in-game replays of the players’ best runs).

Atari Ships Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure

Atari, Inc. announced that Dragon Ball¾: Advanced Adventure for the Game Boy Advance has shipped to retail stores nationwide. Expanding on its best-selling Dragon Ball Z brand of interactive games, Atari’s release of Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure is the only game on GBA that gives fans the chance to experience the origins of the Dragon Ball universe and Goku’s rise to power. Developed by Dimps, the creative team behind past Dragon Ball Z hits including Budokai, Budokai 2, and Budokai 3 for PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure is rated ’E10’ for Everyone 10 and older.

In Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure, players will have the opportunity to relive all of Goku’s childhood adventures through a blend of exciting, authentic gameplay that includes side-scrolling, fighting and flying. In addition to the most exhilarating aspects of DBZ combat are sequences featuring all of Goku’s childhood techniques and 18 exciting levels in story mode. Based on the Dragon Ball animated series, this "prequel" to Dragon Ball Z gives players the chance to experience Goku’s ascension to one of the greatest superheroes in animation, manga/comic book history.

"Atari’s Dragon Ball Z games have succeeded because of their ability to authentically capture the distinct characteristics and exciting action of the series," said Emily Anadu, Atari Product Manager. "We are thrilled to offer fans a new spin on the franchise by allowing them to experience the origins of the DBZ universe and the rise of Goku, one of anime’s most beloved characters."

"Not only is Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure the best Dragon Ball game yet released, it’s also an enjoyable, good-looking, technique-filled action game ... " says Nintendo Power Magazine in the May 2006 issue.

Atari’s lineup of Dragon Ball Z products is the gold standard of anime-based video games, with more than 10 million units sold since May 2002. For additional information about Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure, please visit http://www.atari.com/dragonballz.

Minnesota Sued Over Video Game Clampdown

The trade group representing the video game industry sued the state of Minnesota on Tuesday to overturn a new bill that would fine children and teens for buying or renting mature or adults-only games.

The Entertainment Software Assn. (ESA) filed the suit in Minnesota Federal District Court, arguing that the bill attempted to substitute governmental judgment for parental supervision.

The ESA has successfully convinced courts to strike down six similar bills during the past five years, usually by arguing that the prohibitions on certain video games were unconstitutional.

"The bill’s tortured effort to end run the First Amendment by punishing kids directly fails under the Constitution because children have rights under the First Amendment, like all other citizens," ESA president Doug Lowenstein said. "The state is attempting to impose liability on children because they know that courts have consistently held that they cannot penalize retailers. We believe that the courts will agree that fining children violates the First Amendment as well."

The bill would impose a $25 fine on anyone under the age of 17 who bought or rented a video game marked "M" for mature or "AO" for adults only. Stores would be required to post signs alerting customers to the restrictions.

Lowenstein said that the average game buyer last year was 40 and the average player was 33. He also questioned how lawmakers reasonably expected retailers to collect the $25 fine from children.

The ESA, the U.S. association for console, computer and Internet game

developers, said many leading retailers already are working to prevent the sale of Mature-rated games to people under 17.

The association’s most recent legal victory came in April when a federal judge in Michigan issued a permanent injunction halting the implementation of a state bill that would ban the sale of violent video games to minors. The judge rejected the state’s claim that the interactive nature of video games makes them less entitled to First Amendment protections, the ESA said.

Online Video Games Set To Get X-rated

The adult entertainment industry is on the verge of making online gaming sexier at a time when mainstream publishers are fighting a political and cultural war over erotic content.

The controversial topic will be the subject of a conference in San Francisco on Thursday, where many of the growing industry’s big names will gather.

"This is the newest industry and the oldest industry in the world coming together," said Jezebel, a telephone sex business owner and operator of the virtual Bareback Bordello in RedLightCenter.com, an online game inspired by Amsterdam’s famed Red Light District and now in test.

Like popular games such as "World of Warcraft" and "Second Life," Utherverse Inc.’s RedLightCenter is an online universe that can support thousands of players. Unlike the mainstream games, where virtual sex happens in areas apart from the main thrust of play, RedLightCenter starts with sex.

"Our product is adult-themed and it’s only for adult users," said Utherverse Chief Executive Brian Shuster.

The majority of video game sales in the United States come from console and hand-held game sales. Hardware makers Sony Corp., Microsoft Corp. and Nintendo Co. Ltd have long declined to license development software to game makers whose titles include sexual content.

Still, sex has been the hot-button issue for the $12.6 billion U.S. video game industry since its ratings board last summer slapped an "Adults Only 18+" label on Take-Two Interactive Software Inc.’s best-selling "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" game. That move followed the discovery of an explicit sex scene known as "Hot Coffee," which could only be unlocked and viewed with a computer download.

Retailers, who do not carry adult-rated games, pulled the title from shelves, costing Take-Two millions of dollars and putting a chill on an industry accustomed to self-censorship.

The incident inflamed critics of video game makers - whose average U.S. customers is an adult man over the age of 25 - and spawned crusades by lawmakers who want to impose fines on retailers who sell sexually explicit or violent games to minors, despite several court rulings that have blocked such laws on First Amendment grounds.

"I’m not interested in playing the political game of getting a game out in

a box and getting it rated. Games have been sickeningly violent over the last decade. Now that they start to show breasts, the government is up in arms," said Shuster.

RedLightCenter is only available via online download.

As bad as it was for mainstream companies, "Hot Coffee" has left the playing field wide open for adult content purveyors, who are always looking for new ways to tempt customers.

Porn site NaughtyAmerica.com promises to challenge RedLightCenter with its adult gaming universe due out in late summer. A subscription to NaughtyAmerica's game will cost less than $12.95 per month, while subscriptions to RedLightCenter will be $20 per month starting June 14.

Those games join other X-rated offerings such as "Virtually Jenna," an online title that gives users the opportunity to have sex with a computer-generated version of popular porn star Jenna Jameson for $29.95 a month.

Paying visitors to RedLightCenter can adopt virtual characters called avatars and use them to live out their sexual fantasies, including having "intercourse" with another avatar.

Still, the game is not limited only to erotic activities. Users can hang around and chat, listen to music at the dance club or even run businesses. The site also offers real-world sex videos and shopping for lingerie and other erotic items.

While sex is the hook, Shuster said his goal is to create a community that drives the heavy traffic a successful Web site needs to thrive.

"Sex isn't as much of a game as it is a way to connect. We're coming in as a way to fill that gap," he said.

In the end, though, the game is all about business.

"It's a more practical way, ultimately, to deliver adult content," he added.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

UK Journalists Union Calls for Yahoo Boycott

The union representing journalists in the UK and Ireland called on its 40,000 members to boycott all Yahoo Inc. products and services to protest the Internet company's reported actions in China.

The National Union of Journalists said it sent a letter on Friday to

Dominique Vidal, Yahoo Europe’s vice president, denouncing the company for allegedly providing information to Chinese authorities about journalists. The union also said it would stop using all Yahoo-operated services.

Yahoo has been cited in court decisions as supplying China’s government with information to help them identify, prosecute and jail writers advocating democracy.

"The NUJ regards Yahoo!’s actions as a completely unacceptable endorsement of the Chinese authorities," wrote Jemima Kiss, chairman of the NUJ new media council in the letter to Vidal.

A Yahoo spokeswoman in San Francisco could not immediately be reached.

Yahoo Chairman and Chief Executive Terry Semel said last month the company had no choice but to comply with local laws and did not have the power to change Chinese policy. He added that he was seeking help from the U.S. government to urge China to allow more media freedom.

The company has been accused by the NUJ and other journalism groups of providing records that led to an eight-year prison term for Li Zhi for discussing pro-democracy issues in a Web forum and of helping identify Shi Tao, who was sentenced to prison for 10 years for forwarding a government email to the foreign press.

Kiss said the NUJ was advising all members, who include reporters, editors, photographers and illustrators, to boycott Yahoo until the company "changes its irresponsible and unethical policy."

Other Internet companies also have come under fire lately for some actions in China, including Google Inc. for saying it would block politically sensitive terms on its Web site in the country and Microsoft’s MSN for shutting down a blog under Chinese government orders.

Google Founder Lobbies for Net Neutrality

Google Inc. co-founder and President Sergey Brin met with U.S. lawmakers on Tuesday to press for legislation that would prevent Internet access providers from charging Web sites more for faster content delivery.

"The only way you can have a fast lane that is useful - that people will pay a premium for - is if there are slow lanes," Brin told reporters after meeting with Republican John McCain, a member of the Senate committee that oversees telecommunications issues.

Google, Microsoft Corp. and other major Internet site operators have joined with small Web site owners to oppose broadband providers such as ATT 2006 Reuters Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or redistribution of Reuters content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Reuters. Reuters shall not be liable for any errors or delays in the content, or for any actions taken in reliance thereon.

Defeat for Net Neutrality Backers

A telecommunications bill that would let phone companies offer TV over their lines but would not prevent toll roads from being set up on the Internet, passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday.

By a vote of 321-101, the House passed the bill.

An amendment by Rep. Edward Markey, D-Massachusetts, designed to guarantee network neutrality by requiring phone and cable networks to provide "nondiscriminatory" service and granting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) authority to enforce it, was defeated by a vote of 269-152.

The approved bill does not discuss the potential significance of network neutrality but prohibits the FCC from creating rules to require it.

"Network neutrality" is the principle that telecommunications companies continue to provide equal access to all sites and services on the Internet, without differentiation, on a first-come, first-served basis.

Specifically, advocates of network neutrality want telecommunications companies to be prevented from blocking or discriminating against Internet content providers by providing "fast lanes" and "slow lanes" that are set up according to how much the content providers pay to get their sites and services to end users.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, argued that Markey’s amendment would give too much power to the FCC and would deprive the telecommunications companies of the revenue they need to develop and deliver new services.

Rather than require phone companies to obtain local licenses for new services, which can take months, the bill allows companies to apply to the FCC to obtain national franchises within 30 days of submission.

This was the explicit trade-off - giving the phone companies freedom to price Internet services in exchange for providing more TV choices to consumers.

"The response to the potential loss of net neutrality shows that the public is aware of the risk of a regulated information highway," said Stacey Quandt, an analyst with the Aberdeen Group. "And the idea of the Internet becoming a ’toll road’ is anathema to the American people."

Some observers believe that market forces would undercut any efforts to create preferential treatment on the Internet.

"There are always market forces," said Struan Robertson, a lawyer with law firm Pinsent Masons and editor of the Internet law Web site Out-Law.com. "If some of the major ISPs try to raise their prices for Web site downloads, this creates an opportunity for other ISPs to undercut them by offering cheaper access."

With the House fight over, a network-neutrality coalition of content providers, including Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, and eBay, will now focus on the issue as it moves to the U.S. Senate.

Google.com Blocked in China According to Media Watchdog

The Google.com search engine has been blocked in most parts of China, as Beijing steps up its efforts to restrict the public's access to information, a Paris-based media watchdog said.

Internet users in many major Chinese cities have had difficulty connecting to the uncensored international version of Google for the past week, Reporters Without Borders said in a statement received here Wednesday.

Aside from the Google.com search engine, Reporters Without Borders said the blocking was being gradually extended to the Google News and Google Mail services.

"Google has just definitively joined the club of western companies that comply with online censorship in China," Reporters Without Borders said.

"It is deplorable that Chinese Internet users are forced to wage a technological war against censorship in order to access banned content."

Random attempts to access Google.com in Beijing appeared to confirm that the international version of the search engine had indeed been made unavailable, while the censored Chinese-language version, Google.cn, was still accessible.

Google.cn was launched in January amid much controversy because the company agreed to censor its service according to the wishes of China's propaganda chiefs.

A Beijing-based Google spokeswoman said Wednesday the company was looking into the apparent effort to block its most widely used search engine, but declined any other comment.

"We launched an investigation last week," spokeswoman Cui Jin said. "As long as we don't have more certain information, it would be irresponsible for us to comment more."

Reporters Without Borders also said the Chinese authorities had largely managed to neutralize software designed to sidestep censorship since late May.

Software such as Dynapass, Ultrasurf, Freegate and Garden Networks is normally used to gain access to news and information that is blocked by the firewall isolating China from the rest of the worldwide web.

Bill Xia, the US-based exile who created Dynapass, said the jamming of these programs had reached "an unprecedented level" and he was convinced the authorities were deploying considerable resources to achieve it.

China: Internet Companies Must Obey Its Laws

China welcomes foreign Internet companies working in China, but they must respect and abide by the country's laws, including those on expression, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Thursday.

The comments by ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao followed remarks Tuesday by Google Inc. co-founder Sergey Brin acknowledging the Internet company has compromised its principles by accommodating Chinese censorship demands.

Liu said China took a positive attitude toward working with companies such as Google, but any cooperation must exist "within a framework of law," and that Beijing hoped firms would abide by China’s regulations.

Google’s Brin said the Internet company had agreed to the censorship demands only after Chinese authorities blocked its service in that country.

Google’s China-approved Web service omits politically sensitive information that might be retrieved during Internet searches, such as details about the June 1989 suppression of political unrest in Tiananmen Square. Its agreement with China has provoked considerable criticism from human rights groups.

Sweden Probes Suspected Web Attacks

Sweden’s domestic intelligence agency said it would probe why the government’s Web site crashed on Sunday amid reports hackers had sought revenge for a crackdown on alleged online piracy.

The government Web site went off line in the early hours of Sunday. The Internet home page of the national police crashed in similar fashion on Thursday.

The police Web site problem came a day after the Pirate Bay Internet page, which the recording industry calls a major source for downloading pirated music and films, was shut by police.

"They (the government) contacted us and wanted to make a police complaint that something has happened with their home page and it is now a question for us investigate if it is a crime or something else," said Anders Thornberg, a spokesman for the Security Police intelligence agency.

Local media said hackers attacked both sites, now functioning again, after the clampdown on Pirate Bay. Pirate Bay is also up and running again.

Sweden’s Emergency Management Agency earlier warned all 31 bodies involved in emergency management, such as the police and rescue services, and all 21 local authorities to ensure they were safe from attacks on their Web sites.

Newspaper Aftonbladet quoted a group called World Wide Hackers as saying they had arranged an attack on the government’s Web site.

Sweden last year banned the downloading of copyright protected music and movies from the Internet after being singled out for criticism by Hollywood. The raid on Pirate Bay was the latest of several actions against suspected online piracy.

Critics say the police are heavy handed and that people should have access to free information via the Internet, including file sharing.

Several hundred people demonstrated in Stockholm on Saturday in support of Pirate Bay.

Spammer, Partners Agree to $10M Settlement

One of the world’s most notorious spammers, his former partners and their companies have agreed to pay $10 million to settle a state lawsuit, Texas officials said Wednesday.

Ryan Pitylak, 24, a recent University of Texas graduate, has admitted sending 25 million e-mails every day at the height of his spamming operation in 2004.

At one time, Pitylak was listed as the fourth-worst spammer in the world by the Spamhaus Project, a London-based international clearinghouse that tracks spammers and works closely with law enforcement officials.

Under the settlement announced Wednesday by the Texas Attorney General’s office, Pitylak owes $1 million in civil penalties. He already has paid the state $225,000 to cover attorneys’ fees.

In a separate settlement with Microsoft Corp., Pitylak agreed to a fine of $1 million and promised never again to send out false, misleading or unsolicited commercial e-mails.

Pitylak’s e-mails touted low-cost mortgages, extended auto warranties and debt-counseling services, among other offers, and he received $3 to $7 for every lead he generated when someone clicked on the links in his messages.

Pitylak says he now opposes spam and is offering his skills to Internet companies to help them fight spam.

Toshiba Unveils 200-GB Laptop Drive

Toshiba has announced plans to start selling a 2.5-inch, 200-GB hard drive, effectively raising the bar on storage capacity for laptops.

The drive uses a relatively new technology, called perpendicular recording, that stands bits of data on the end of a disk rather than on the flat surface of the media, as with traditional recording technologies.

Perpendicular recording provides up to a five-fold increase in storage capacity over earlier magnetic-recording techniques.

By allowing more data bits to pass under the drive head in the same amount of time, the new technology also increases data throughput without having to increase the disk’s rotation speed. This performance boost comes without increases in power consumption or heat generation.

Experts say that larger data capacity in small drives is critical at this juncture for breakthroughs in notebook PCs.

Toshiba envisions the new drive being used in high-end laptops, including newer models equipped with video-capture boards and those running Windows XP Media Center, said Maciek Brzeski, a marketing executive in the company’s storage drive division.

"Toshiba and other companies are bringing out laptops with TV tuners installed, and some have the new high-definition DVD players, which will require a lot more storage capacity, especially for capturing an HD feed,"

he said.

The new 2.5-inch product, which will be available in August, boosts data capacity to 1.67 times that of Toshiba’s former highest-capacity 2.5-inch drive.

Other manufacturers, including Seagate and Hitachi, are beginning to implement perpendicular recording for small-format drives that will be used in all sorts of electronics, from digital-music players to mobile phones.

Seagate recently unveiled a laptop with 160 GB of storage capacity, and followed that up with a monster PC hard drive with 750 GB of storage space that can hold some 25 DVDs, 50 hours of home video, 15,000 songs, 15,000 digital pictures, and 50 computer games - and still have 300 GB of free space left over.

"This is a significant breakthrough for the hard-drive industry because the longitudinal recording technology has been extended as far as possible," said John Rydning, research manager at IDC, in a recent interview. "It sets the stage for further data capacity increases in 2.5-inch products."

McAfee Buys Preventsys

McAfee Inc., a provider of computer security software and services, said on Tuesday it has acquired closely held Preventsys Inc.

McAfee spokeswoman Siobhan MacDermott said the transaction was valued "in the low millions." She declined to elaborate.

McAfee, based in Santa Clara, California, sells a wide range of security products, including ones that help defend against computer viruses.

Preventsys, of Carlsbad, California, develops security risk management software, which companies use to identify security problems as they seek to demonstrate and monitor compliance with internal auditing procedures and government regulations.

McAfee Chief Executive George Samenuk last week said at an investor conference that he planned to use some of the company’s $1.1 billion in cash to broaden its portfolio of security products through acquisitions.

Samenuk told a Cowen & Co. investor conference that he hoped to make several acquisitions over the coming quarters. The deals would be valued between $5 million and $250 million, he said.

McAfee disclosed the acquisition on Tuesday as the company’s top executives spoke at a company analyst day in New York.

Microsoft Releases Antigen E-mail Security

Microsoft on Tuesday announced the first release of the Antigen enterprise antivirus and antispam software since it purchased the technology with Sybari Software in 2005.

The company released new versions of Antigen for Exchange, Antigen for SMTP Gateways, Antigen Spam Manager, and Antigen Enterprise Manager. The updates add Microsoft's antivirus engine to the default third-party scanning engines used by the product. The products also add support for clustered Exchange deployments and improved management features for handling quarantined messages and log files, Microsoft said.

Microsoft completed its acquisition of Sybari in June, 2005 and has spent the last year certifying the company's antivirus and antispam products with its Security Development Lifecycle process, said Steve Brown, director of product management, security and access management at Microsoft.

Microsoft's antivirus engine will work alongside engines by Computer Associates, Norman Data Defense, Sophos, MailFilters, VirusBuster, AhnLab, Authentium, and Kaspersky Labs, the company said in a statement. Microsoft also added a digital signing feature for antivirus engine updates which makes those updates more secure, Brown said.

Antigen uses five scan engines by default. However, customers can increase that number to nine by purchasing the Antigen Messaging Security Suite, which combines Antigen Exchange, Gateway, and Spam Manager, and allows customers to increase the number of engines that can be used, said Joe Licari, director of product management for Antigen at Microsoft.

A new version of Antigen Enterprise Manager, a management tool for Antigen-protected servers, allows administrators to pull quarantine information from distributed Antigen installations and manage those centrally.

The Antigen Cluster Awareness feature allows Antigen to fail over in clustered Exchange deployments without having to update signature files and other configuration settings that could cause downtime, Licari said.

Perot Systems was a longtime Sybari customer and plans to upgrade to the new release of Antigen Exchange, though the company did not evaluate the other Antigen updates, said Don Westurn, a senior Exchange engineer, at Perot.

Westurn said he liked the integrated SpamCure antispam feature in the new Antigen release. That technology was previously an add-on for Antigen, but is now part of the standard product, and replaces stripped down antispam features like basic subject line filtering.

Antigen was tightly integrated with Exchange before Microsoft bought the company, and is even more so now, said Ajlan Karaoglu of Perot.

The new Antigen products will be available July 1 and will start at $10.50 per user for an annual subscription, with volume discounts. A three-month free trial download of the products will be available starting Tuesday.

Phishing Scam Takes Aim at MySpace.com

A phishing site that harvested the login and credentials of MySpace.com users was removed as of Friday from a California server, a security vendor reported.

A phishing attack involves tricking users into visiting a look-a-like Web

page that asks for personal information, which is then sent to a hacker.

The rich trove of personal information stored on MySpace user pages is making the social networking site an increasing attractive target for identity theft, said Ross Paul, a senior product manager at Websense, which makes security software.

The attack would not have been noticed by most users, Paul said. The attack starts when a user is sent a link through an instant messaging program.

The link is from someone in their contact lists, asking them to click the link to MySpace to view photos, Paul said. The link leads to a fraudulent MySpace login page. Once the victim enters their information, they are then transparently logged into the real MySpace pages, Paul said.

But a hacker then has access to personal information stored by MySpace, such as someone's address and birthday, which could be used to open a bank account, Paul said.

A hacker can also tap other instant messaging contacts or e-mail addresses to send out the link to the phishing site, which often is done using automated programs.

"The rising popularity of this kind of meeting place is obviously increasing the potential for financial gain," Paul said. "The more information you give MySpace, the more at risk you would be if someone managed to get a hold of your login information."

MySpace, started in 2004 and bought by News Corp. last year, counts at least 73 million users and is growing. MySpace's "viral" networking model allows friends of friend to easily connect, but sexual predators have also used its features to meet underage victims.

As a result, MySpace appointed a chief security officer in April and implemented careful page monitoring.

Study Finds Companies Snooping On Employee E-mail

Big Brother is not only watching but he is also reading your e-mail.

According to a new study, about a third of big companies in the United States and Britain hire employees to read and analyze outbound e-mail as they seek to guard against legal, financial or regulatory risk.

More than a third of U.S. companies surveyed also said their business was hurt by the exposure of sensitive or embarrassing information in the past 12 months, according to the annual study from a company specializing in protecting corporate e-mail at large businesses.

"What folks are concerned about is confidential or sensitive information that is going out," said Gary Steele, chief executive of Cupertino, California-based Proofpoint Inc., which conducted the study along with Forrester Research.

The top concern was protecting the financial privacy and identity of customers followed by compliance issues and a bid to prevent confidential leaks. Businesses ranked monitoring for inappropriate content and

attachments as less important.

Steele also said on Friday that more and more companies are employing staff to read outgoing e-mails of workers who typically have no idea their correspondence is being monitored.

"It is not something that is broadcast," Steele said. "There are organizations where employees think they can say whatever they want to say and nobody is going to read it."

The survey gathered responses concerning e-mail security from 406 companies in the United States and the United Kingdom with more than 1,000 employees.

In both regions, 38 percent of respondents said they employed staff to read or otherwise analyze outbound e-mail. In the United States, 44 percent of companies with more than 20,000 employees said they hire workers to snoop on workers' e-mail.

Nearly one in three U.S. companies also said they had fired an employee for violating e-mail policies in the past 12 months and estimated that about 20 percent of outgoing e-mails contain content that poses a legal, financial or regulatory risk.

Parents Mark Internet Favorites and Dislikes

Most parents love the Internet and want their kids to use it. But a new survey finds almost as many also fear the online world - especially social networking sites such as MySpace - and worry their kids will get in trouble with people they meet.

"It's this complete dichotomy," says James Steyer, CEO of Common Sense Media, which today will release results from a survey commissioned about parental attitudes toward the Internet.

"They see this incredible potential, and they know their kids have to be there," Steyer says. But "it's also what they are scared of most."

The study, which was conducted online May 5-10 by Insight Research Group with a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points, says 80% of parents are concerned about kids meeting sexual predators online.

But another study, conducted April 25-May 1 by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, shows 30% of 18- to 24-year-olds worry about getting harassed or stalked online.

That's because young people who largely have grown up with the Net think of it as a social outlet, says Jennifer Berktold, a senior associate with the research group.

To young people, the benefits of giving out some personal information to reach out to friends outweigh risks.

And, the study shows they're so comfortable with the medium that 78% have a personal website or blog.

But findings suggest both parents and teens need more education about using online media, Steyer says.

Parents also recognize the importance of the Net. The survey shows 91% think the Internet helps their children explore their passions, and 77% think the Internet is one of the most valuable education tools teens have. But 88% think it’s important to know what their kids are doing online.

That’s why on Wednesday Common Sense is also launching an educational campaign that includes a website, fliers and a multimillion dollar public service advertising campaign. A guide for parents and a tip sheet for teens and parents can be found at commonsensemedia.org.

In the next two weeks, the San Francisco-based non-profit will launch an initial $3 million public education ad campaign with several media partners to be named later this month, Steyer says. The campaign will include public service ads in print, online, TV and radio.

Nancy Willard of Eugene, Ore., an Internet safety consultant to schools, applauds the idea of a media campaign even though plenty of information for parents and kids already are online.

"We tend to do a good job of reaching those parents who are paying attention," she says. "But we are also struggling in finding ways to get to those parents who are not paying attention."

Researcher Looks to PCs for Medical Cures

Researcher David Baker believes the key to an AIDS vaccine or a cure for cancer may be that old PC sitting under a layer of dust in your closet or the one on your desk doing little else but running a screen saver. Those outdated or idle computers may be just what Baker needs to turn his ideas into scientific breakthroughs.

Baker, 43, a professor of biochemistry at the University of Washington, realized about two years ago that he didn’t have access to the computing horsepower needed for his research - nor the money to buy time on supercomputers elsewhere.

So he turned to the kindness - and the computers - of strangers.

Using software made popular in a massive yet so far fruitless search for intelligent life beyond Earth, he and his research team are tapping the computing power of tens of thousands of PCs whose owners are donating spare computer time to chop away at scientific problems over the Internet.

Baker’s Rosetta(at)home project is attracting PC users who like the idea of helping find a cure for cancer and admire the way Baker has involved regular people in his research that aims to predict how protein structures unfold at the atomic level.

"We’re getting these volunteer virtual communities popping up that are doing wonderful things," Baker said. "People like to get together for good causes."

Baker’s work could one day lead to cures to diseases from cancer to Alzheimer’s. The project takes a more direct approach to other diseases, including the search for an HIV vaccine. In that case, his team hopes to develop a way to help the body recognize critical parts of the virus’

proteins so that it can no longer hide from the body’s immune system.

The project sends work to computers that have installed the necessary free software. When the machine is idle, it figures out how an individual protein - a building block of life - might fold or contort, displaying the possibilities in a screen saver. When the PC is done crunching, it sends the results back to Baker’s team and grabs more work.

More than 60,000 people are donating computer power to Baker’s research - equivalent to the power of one supercomputer. He hopes to increase that number by at least tenfold - enough to lead to major scientific breakthroughs.

The technology, known as distributed or network computing, isn’t new. In the late 1990s, a project at the University of California, Berkeley started inviting people to donate their computer power to scan distant radio signals for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence. Millions of people have participated in the SETI(at)home project.

Two years ago, as Baker was realizing his project’s limitations, the Berkeley group developed new software and opened it to other research that could benefit. The SETI work continues and remains its biggest beneficiary, with donated computer time from nearly 953,000 computers.

Baker’s project now has participants from around the world, but the earliest donor of idle computer time came from across campus at the university’s Housing and Food Services.

"I knew the kind of power that personal computers could have if you pulled them all together," said Ethan Owens, 27, an employee who first offered his department’s 200 computers to the Astronomy Department before taking his offer to Baker.

Soon, dormitory front desks, computer labs, maintenance offices and kitchen business centers became part of Rosetta(at)home.

By the time school started last fall, the two organizations were working together to recruit students to put the networking software on their PCs.

The project has grown both on and off campus ever since.

Many of the most active volunteers are cancer survivors or people who have lost close friends or relatives to the disease.

Philip Williams, 53, who writes computer software for the federal government in Washington, D.C., said he started pulling old Macs out of the closet when he learned more about the Rosetta project. The two-time Hodgkin’s survivor plans to add more computers soon.

Although he continues to contribute computer time to a few other projects, Williams’ loyalty clearly is with Baker.

"Baker’s group has a way of making people think that they are part of the project," said Williams, who has also volunteered to help diagnose problems other participants are having with the software.

Baker said users don’t just think they are important to the project, they really are.

"As a scientist, one of the things you’re supposed to do is outreach.

Outreach has become fundamental to solving the problem," Baker said, pointing out that his team has received some ideas about new research angles by involving the public. Some were generated on the project's message boards.

The volunteers also have recruited more people to help, have made useful suggestions about software issues and have helped test new software versions before they are sent to everyone using Rosetta(at)home.

Williams said Baker's participation in project message boards has made Rosetta much more than a quirky project of the month.

David P. Anderson, director of the Berkeley Open Infrastructure for Network Computing, said Baker's lab has done a particularly good job of connecting the participants to the science, including sharing the potential medical impact of the project.

"Hopefully, Rosetta is setting a standard that the other projects will have to live up to if they want to hold onto their participants," Anderson said.

Mark Pottorff, 40, a computer programmer in Rochester, Minn., was contributing computer time for the search for extraterrestrial life when he heard about Rosetta(at)home and decided to switch.

"The outcome is much more beneficial," and more likely to get results than a search for ET, Pottorff said, adding, "If you reach him, he's still 100 million light years away."

Rosetta: http://boinc.bakerlab.org/rosetta/

Berkeley Open Infrastructure for Network Computing: http://boinc.berkeley.edu/computer

Cybercrime Spurs College Courses in Digital Forensics

One of the hottest new courses on U.S. college campuses is a direct result of cybercrime.

Classes in digital forensics - the collection, examination and presentation of digitally stored evidence in criminal and civil investigations - are cropping up as fast as the hackers and viruses that spawn them.

About 100 colleges and universities offer undergraduate and graduate courses in digital forensics, with a few offering majors. There are programs at Purdue University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Tulsa, Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Central Florida. Five years ago, there were only a handful.

"I teach students to be like (TV supersleuth) MacGyver," says Sujeet Shenoi, a computer science professor at the University of Tulsa.

Traditional students, police officers, government employees and aspiring security consultants are taking the courses as more crooks stash ill-gotten data and goods on PCs, PDAs, cellphones, network servers, iPods and even Xboxes.

Students learn where to find digital evidence and handle it without contaminating it. Once preserved, students are shown how to examine evidence and present it clearly during court testimony. "If you revert to geek speak, you can lose a judge, jury and prosecutor," says Mark Pollitt, a digital forensics professor at Johns Hopkins University who retired in 2003 after 20 years as an FBI agent.

Digital forensics is considered a crucial weapon in law enforcement's escalating war against computer-related crimes. The science is used in criminal investigations; civil cases such as employment lawsuits where personnel records and e-mail correspondence are sought; and by companies faced with cyberattacks. Plus, there are evolving state and federal laws that define how evidence is handled in civil cases.

The evidence is particularly important in the seizure of data for child pornography cases, which comprise a majority of criminal investigations in the USA, says Marcus Rogers, an associate professor who heads the computer forensics program at Purdue University's College of Technology.

The FBI handled more than 9,500 computer forensics cases in fiscal year 2005, which ended in September, compared with about 3,600 in fiscal 2000, according to an FBI briefing.

The crush of cases has domestic intelligence agencies such as the National Security Agency and the CIA, local law-enforcement officials and companies clamoring for experts in finding and preserving digital evidence, security experts says. "There is a thirst in government agencies for (cyberinvestigators)," Pollitt says. There appear to be no shortage of suitors. Since he enrolled in Purdue's master's program last fall, Blair Gillam says he has been approached by recruiters representing government agencies and the private sector.

JFK Papers, Photos To Be Put On Internet

The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum is launching a massive project to post 48 million pages of documents, 400,000 photos and 1,200 hours of video on the Internet.

The late president's papers will be digitized first, and could be available on the Internet in 18 months, said Allan B. Goodrich, the library's chief archivist.

The entire projects, which also includes 7.5 million feet of motion-picture film and 9,000 hours of audio recordings, is expected to take a decade to complete.

"President Kennedy loved history and drew inspiration from it. Hopefully, by making these collections widely available, we can inspire new generations in many lands," the late president's youngest brother, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (news, bio, voting record), said Wednesday.

The JFK Library undertaking will serve as a pilot program for a presidential library system that has more than 400 million papers, said Sharon Fawcett, assistant archivist at the National Archives and Records Administration, which has responsibility for all 12 presidential libraries.

The project will uses computer equipment and technical support donated by

EMC Corp. in Hopkinton.

Effort Unveiled for New Web Site for The Poor

Low-income Americans would have free and easy access to vital information under an effort announced Thursday to create a bilingual Web site.

One Economy, a non-profit group that uses technology to upgrade the lives of the poor, said it aims to raise $20 million to start the project, Public Internet Channel.

The site would provide information about such basics as public safety, emergency services, education, health care and jobs.

U.S. Senators John McCain, an Arizona Republican, and Barack Obama, an Illinois Democrat, serve as honorary co-chairs of the non-profit group and hailed the initiative.

"It will ensure that all Americans have the same easy access to information and resources they need to prosper in our global economy without getting lost in the World Wide Web," McCain said in a statement.

Said Obama: "The Public Internet Channel can do for accessing social services what Yahoo! has done for accessing entertainment or what Craigslist has done for accessing local goods for sale."

The non-profit group said it plans to launch prototypes in several cities in the next year, beginning with Baltimore.

As part of its programs, the group also runs a Web site called the Beehive that offers tips for managing money and starting a business. It has also helped bring broadband Internet access into the homes of 200,000 poor people.

Much of the information the new site will provide is now available elsewhere. The new initiative would allow Internet users to obtain it quickly on one site in English and Spanish.

One Economy said it hopes to obtain funding from corporations and philanthropic organizations.

Fill Up With News at Gas Station TV

Motorists cringing at the cost of fuel can now at least fill up on current news and information while tethered to the pump.

Internet-enabled Gas Station TV formally launched its digital television network Monday featuring ABC programming and original content including local news, sports, weather and traffic. The network will air constantly updated content to refueling motorists on 20-inch high-definition LCD monitors embedded in gas dispensers.

GSTV already has conducted a test pilot in Dallas and expects to reach 100 locations of the Wal-Mart-based retail gasoline chain Murphy USA by

September and 400 stations in the top 10 U.S. markets by next year.

"We're very focused on creating an enjoyable and informative experience for the average of four minutes the user spends at the pump with content that has a sense of purpose and that can help them," GSTV CEO David Leider said, describing the venture as based on an advertising revenue model.

Current content includes "News You Can Use" segments from ABC's "Good Morning America" along with news, weather forecasts and traffic updates from ABC-owned stations as well as promotional material. Rotating ads from such retail brands as Pepsi, Frito-Lay and US Tobacco are woven into the segments and geared toward driving the consumer back into the convenience store.

GSTV president Adam Bleibtreu said future collaborations with other content providers are imminent.

"We view this as a great distribution platform to provide the appropriate mix of content," Bleibtreu said. "This is a truly captive audience that we have - those stuck at the pump - and this is a great opportunity to engage them."

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